

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1902

October 31, 2017

The Honorable David J. Shulkin
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

I am concerned about reports that Togus Veterans Administration Medical Center in Augusta, Maine not only lost power yesterday, but that, potentially, its backup power plan also failed. Reports seem to indicate emergency power was brought in from outside the facility.

As you know, Togus is Maine's only VA hospital. This VA hospital serves thousands of Veterans from minor routine exams, to chronic health issues, and even serious life threatening conditions. There are hundreds of Maine Veterans at Togus on any given day, so a loss of power could have a significant impact on care.

Although yesterday's storms in Maine and New England wreaked havoc on the entire region and left hundreds of thousands of Mainers without power, it is unacceptable that a backup power plan at Togus would fail, if that indeed happened.

I write today to inquire if indeed Togus called for outside backup power yesterday. If so, was there a plan in place for emergency power on site, and if so, why did that plan not succeed? Does Togus have adequate backup power? Is that power functional? Was the backup power onsite properly fueled? Is onsite backup power properly, and regularly, tested? If power was brought in from outside the facility, did it arrive fast enough and did you experience patient complications prior to its arrival?

As a Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, and a Maine citizen and Congressman who cares deeply for the welfare of our Veterans, I believe it is important to find solutions to this problem, if it took place, so it does not happen again.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress

Cc: Ryan Lilly, Director, Maine VA Healthcare System